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The Story of Christianity: Volume 1 By Justo L. González Published by HarperCollins This book offers a captivating account of the history of the Christian faith from its early beginnings to the dawn of the Reformation. The author, Justo L. González, weaves together historical texts and tells the stories of significant figures in Christianity's narrative, making it an engaging read. The first volume explores the earliest parts of Christianity, covering Jesus' apostles and the theological issues they faced. As the church evolved over time, the story became more complex and intriguing. The author reveals the essential data discovered in recent years, including the significant role women played in early Christian history and the shaping of church traditions. The book is divided into 175 chapters, starting with the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. It brings to life the people, events, and theological debates that shaped Christianity, including Martin Luther's challenge to a corrupt pope and the spread of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and South America. Recent developments in the church are also covered, such as feminist theologies, interfaith dialogue, and the return of the Russian Orthodox Church. The book provides a complete and up-to-date retelling of Christian history, offering insights into the changes and directions of the church up to the twenty-first century. Rating: 4/5 The Story of Christianity concludes with a reflective examination of the significant issues and debates currently facing Christianity. This narrative spans from its vulnerable beginnings to its widespread influence at the onset of the Protestant Reformation, providing an insightful look into the events, personalities, and revolutionary ideas that shaped the first 15 centuries of the church. Through the expertise of renowned historian Justo González, The Story of Christianity skillfully weaves together details about prominent figures within various Christian traditions. It highlights how Christians have grappled with theological issues, shaping the future direction of the church in response to new challenges and opportunities. This updated edition incorporates recent archaeological discoveries, offering a more comprehensive understanding of early Christian communities. Notably, it reveals a richer diversity of "Christianities" during the first century through the recovery of Gnostic texts. Furthermore, González's work includes significant research on the role of women throughout church history, providing a fascinating introduction to the expansive history of Christianity. Incorporating recent archaeological findings into The Story of Christianity, this revised edition offers a fresh perspective on early Christian communities, including previously unknown Gnostic texts that reveal a more diverse range of "Christianities" in the first century. Additionally, research over the past twenty-five years highlights the significant contributions women have made throughout church history. Meanwhile, for subscription-related inquiries or technical issues such as downloading books, users can refer to support materials provided directly through the service's settings section or designated learning resources pages. The pricing structure is also outlined clearly, comparing annual and monthly plans that offer full library access with varying duration and cost options. Furthermore, as an online textbook platform, Perlego provides access to over 1 million books across various topics for a lower price than buying individual titles, catering to diverse educational needs. For users who prefer auditory learning, text-to-speech functionality is available within the app, allowing them to listen to selected texts while highlighting their content. Regarding specific book formats, The Story of Christianity: Volume 1 by Justo L. González is available in both PDF and ePub formats, part of a vast collection of more than one million books on theology, religion, and Jewish history that users can explore through the service's online library. History plays a vital role in comprehending not only the life of Jesus but also the entirety of the biblical message. The Old Testament is replete with historical narrative, and the Bible tells the story of God's revelation through the lives and experiences of His people. Without this narrative, it would be impossible to grasp the nature of that revelation. The New Testament writers emphasize the importance of history in conveying God's revelation. The Gospels provide a chronological account of Jesus' life, with different authors placing events within specific historical contexts. For instance, Luke places the birth of Jesus during the reign of Augustus Caesar and the governorship of Quirinius, while Matthew connects Jesus to the genealogy of Israel and the rule of Herod the king. The Gospel of Mark mentions that Jesus began his ministry in the days of John the Baptist, whereas Matthew's account emphasizes the significance of these events within the broader context of Israel's history. The fourth Gospel highlights the ongoing nature of God's revelation through Jesus, who is described as the same Word present at the beginning with God. The First Epistle of John reinforces this idea by stating that the message of Christ was initially received from the Father and continued to be passed down through generations. Luke's book of Acts continues the narrative beyond the ascension of Jesus, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering the early Christian church to witness to the world. Rather than focusing solely on the deeds of the apostles, Luke highlights the significance of the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind the church's mission. Luke's second book leaves us wondering about the fate of Paul and the church leaders after their time. However, Luke had a theological perspective - the story wouldn't end before the end of all history. This means the church's history is more than just an institution or movement; it's a record of the Spirit's actions through the people who came before us. As we explore this narrative, we'll encounter examples of those who misused their faith for personal gain or to increase power. Some may forget or twist biblical teachings, leading to persecution and division. It can be tempting to doubt the church's authenticity when faced with such challenges. Yet, it's essential to remember that this history is also about sinners like ourselves. We see this in early Christian leaders being depicted as both people of faith and sinners. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians illustrates this point. Ultimately, it was through these sinners and their struggles that the biblical message has been passed down to us. The church's history includes not just scripture but also the stories of those who struggled to be faithful witnesses in diverse circumstances, often at great personal cost. Throughout history, many people have sought to spread their faith, even amidst turmoil and famine. Some aimed to restore order, providing shelter for the homeless and food for the hungry. Others ventured into uncharted lands to preach their message. People have chosen different paths to witness their faith - through words, prayer, renunciation, or even force. We are heirs to this diverse legacy, with some actions inspiring and others revolting. However, all of these witnesses have shaped who we are today. If we fail to understand our past, we cannot grasp ourselves. The past continues to influence us, impacting how we interpret the Christian message. Even if we're unfamiliar with key figures like Martin Luther or Anselm of Canterbury, their ideas still resonate through our actions in church and our faith. Acknowledging this historical context can prevent the illusion that our interpretation is absolute, a danger that can confuse it with the Word of God. To avoid being bound by tradition, we must first comprehend its impact on us. By recognizing the glasses we wear - metaphorically - we can see the world more clearly. This awareness allows us to choose which elements from the past and present we accept or reject. Our view of history is not static; it's also colored by our current perspective and aspirations for the future. The Story presented here diverges from earlier accounts of the church's history in several ways. One notable difference is the emphasis placed on the contributions of women throughout the church's life, which was often overlooked in previous histories. This shift reflects a growing awareness of the significant role women have played in every era, including the church's history. Additionally, this Story does not view the North Atlantic region as the culmination of the church's story. Instead, it recognizes the global impact of Christianity and the changing dynamics that have occurred over the past two centuries. This new perspective is driven by the statistics of recent decades, which reveal a significant shift in the global Christian community. As we approach the future, our understanding of history will continue to evolve. We must acknowledge that our interpretation of the past is influenced by our present and that future generations will view our time as part of their historical record. This realization underscores the importance of doing history accurately, so that we can make informed decisions about our actions and inactions. Throughout the church's history, renewal has been linked to a renewed understanding of its past. As we move into the twenty-first century, Christians face new challenges that require us to draw on the experiences of earlier generations who faced similar situations. The early church's response to indifference and contempt can serve as a valuable guide in times when similar attitudes prevail in Western society. the fourth and fifth centuries' response to mass migrations may offer insights into addressing the current demographic shifts. The devotion of medieval scholars and Protestant Reformers can inspire younger scholars and theologians. The history of missions in the 19th century serves as a warning about cultural and social boundaries when churches cross them. However, our understanding of past events is filtered through our present-day perspectives, concerns, and hopes. History is not an objective portrayal but rather an interpretation from the historian's perspective. When examining past events, we bring our own lenses, which can both illuminate and distort our understanding. The early Christian community believed that God prepared the birth of Jesus in various historical circumstances prior to its actual occurrence. Similarly, the church's growth was influenced by the work of Jesus, with God having planned the way for its spread. As a result, the church was never disconnected from the world around it. The first Christians were Jewish, and their faith spread among other Jews and eventually Gentiles within and beyond the Roman Empire boundaries. In the 4th century BCE, a new force emerged in the form of Alexander and his Macedonian armies. Following their victory over the Persians, Alexander gained control of Palestine, but his reign was short-lived, and his vast empire was subsequently fragmented. For an extended period, two resulting dynasties, one based in Egypt and the other in Syria, clashed for dominance over Palestine, leading to a prolonged era of turmoil and political instability. As the birthplace of Christianity, Palestine's history is deeply intertwined with the conquests of Alexander, which sought to justify themselves on ideological grounds. Rather than mere territorial expansion, Alexander aimed to unite and enrich the world by disseminating the wisdom of Greek civilization. The resulting blend of Greek and conquered civilizations' elements, known as Hellenism, brought a degree of unity to the eastern Mediterranean basin, paving the way for Roman conquest and later the spread of Christianity. However, not all Jews welcomed Hellenism, perceiving it as a threat to their faith in the One God due to its tendency to equate and mix the gods of different nations. The history of Palestine from Alexander's conquest to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE can be seen as a constant struggle between Hellenizing pressures and Jewish devotion to their deity and traditions. Under Judas Maccabaeus' leadership, the Jews experienced a period of political autonomy. The pinnacle of this struggle was the Jewish rebellion led by the Maccabee family in the 2nd century BCE, which briefly secured religious and political independence. However, their successors eventually yielded to the Hellenizing pressures of the Seleucids, who had succeeded Alexander in ruling Syria. When stricter Jews protested, they faced persecution. As a partial consequence, Rome intervened, with Pompey conquering the land and deposing the last Maccabee ruler, Aristobulus II, in 63 BCE. The Romans justified their imperial conquests through an ideology, believing it was their duty to civilize the surrounding world – which meant constructing and beautifying cities similar to Rome and placing them under Roman rule. The concept of "civilization" can be interpreted as the process of transforming a place into a city. As such, when no cities existed, new ones were built. Conversely, where ancient cities already stood, they were enhanced and public structures modeled after Rome itself were erected. Roman policies towards the religious practices and cultural traditions of conquered peoples generally exhibited tolerance. Soon after conquest, the Roman government granted the descendants of the Maccabees a degree of autonomy and utilized them in governing the land.